

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY LONDON NIACT IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY MUSCAT IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 011531

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, MU, UK

SUBJECT: POTENTIAL PUBLICITY ON U.S. MILITARY RELATIONSHIP
WITH OMAN

REF: LONDON 630

1. WE HAVE BEEN INFORMED THAT PRESS AND OTHER MEDIA HAVE
OBTAINED SOME INFORMATION RELATING TO U.S. AGREEMENT TO
SELL A NUMBER OF TOW LAUNCHERS AND MISSILES TO OMAN. IN
ADDITION, THERE IS AT LEAST ONE MEDIA REPORT TO EFFECT THAT
USG HAS ARRANGED WITH GOVERNMENT OF OMAN TO ESTABLISH A
"U.S. BASE" IN OMAN. WE ANTICIPATE THAT DEPARTMENT WILL
BE QUERIED ON THESE SUBJECTS ON JANUARY 17.

2. WITH REGARD TO TOW'S, WE PROPOSE TO RESPOND TO ANY
QUERIES ON THE SUBJECT BY STATING THAT OMAN HAS FOR SOME
TIME BEEN ELIGIBLE FOR FOREIGN MILITARY SALES (FMS). WE

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WOULD ADD THAT IT IS AGAINST OUR POLICY TO GO INTO THE

DETAILS OF ANY GIVEN SALE OF THIS TYPE BUT THAT SOME MODEST SALES TO OMAN HAVE TAKEN PLACE ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS. WE WOULD NOT DENY SALE OF TOW'S. ON BACKGROUND, IF PRESSED, WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO INDICATE THAT SUCH A SALE HAS TAKEN PLACE BUT WOULD AVOID GETTING INTO SPECIFIC NUMBERS.

3. IF QUERIED REGARDING AGREEMENT TO ESTABLISH A "U.S. BASE" IN OMAN, WE PROPOSE TO DENY CATEGORICALLY THAT DISCUSSION ON SUCH SUBJECT HAS TAKEN PLACE, THAT THERE IS ANY AGREEMENT TO THIS EFFECT, OR THAT USG HAS ANY INTEREST IN A BASE IN OMAN. IF PRESSED, WE WOULD GO ON TO SAY THAT WE DID DISCUSS WITH RULER OF OMAN, DURING HIS RECENT VISIT HERE, OUR INTEREST IN HAVING PERMISSION FOR U.S. MILITARY AIRCRAFT TO USE LANDING FACILITIES OCCASIONALLY, AS REQUIRED, AT AIRFIELD ON MASIRAH ISLAND IN OMAN, WHICH IS OPERATED BY HMG. SUCH OCCASIONAL USE WAS AGREED TO, SUBJECT TO DISCUSSION WITH HMG. SUCH DISCUSSION IS UNDER WAY.

4. YOU SHOULD APPROACH APPROPRIATE OMANI REP SOONEST, ALERTING HIM TO POSSIBLE EARLY PUBLICITY AND OBTAINING CONCURRENCE IN LINE WE PROPOSE TO TAKE IF QUERIED HERE. WE ARE AWARE FROM BRITISH EMBASSY OFFICER HERE THAT OMANIS HAVE TOLD HMG IN LONDON THAT THEY DESIRE TO KEEP SECRET THE UNDERSTANDING WE ARE WORKING OUT AMONG US RELATING TO THE USE OF MASIRAH AIRFIELD. YOU SHOULD SAY THAT INFORMATION ON THIS SUBJECT WILL INEVITABLY BECOME MATTER OF PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE AND, INDEED, WE BELIEVE WE WILL BE FACED WITH QUERIES IN NEAR FUTURE. YOU SHOULD ADD THAT IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR US, IN ANY EVENT, TO INFORM U.S. CONGRESS OF ARRANGEMENT BEING WORKED OUT FOR OCCASIONAL USE OF MASIRAH. FURTHERMORE, WE BELIEVE IT IMPOSSIBLE AND INDEED UNDESIRABLE TO MAINTAIN TOTAL SECRECY BECAUSE SUCH AN EFFORT WOULD LEAD TO UNJUSTIFIED AND DISTORTED SPECULATION AS TO ARRANGEMENT WHICH WE HAVE BEEN DISCUSSING. YOU SHOULD SAY THAT WE THEREFORE HOPE OMANI GOVERNMENT WILL AGREE WITH US ON LINE WE PROPOSE TO TAKE.

5. YOU SHOULD ALSO INFORM HMG SOONEST ALONG ABOVE LINES AND SEEK THEIR COMMENTS.

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6. REPORT SOONEST, SINCE WE MAY FACE QUESTIONS AT NOON BRIEFING FRIDAY.
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